

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6284

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, PBOR, MX, US

SUBJECT: INS AIR REPATRIATION AND MEXICAN FLOOD DAMAGE

REF: MEXICO 8856

1. MEXICAN PRESS AND RADIO CARRIED NEWS ITEM MORNING JULY 20 THAT INS WASHINGTON HAD ANNOUNCED COMMENCEMENT OF PROGRAM FOR "FORCED" (UNDOUBTEDLY ADDED HERE) REPATRIATION BY AIR OF SOME 15,000 MEXICAN ALIENS. NEWS BROADCASTS SAID THAT FLIGHTS WOULD TRANSPORT ALIENS TO INTERIOR CITIES SOUTH OF LINE RUNNING FROM MAZATLAN ON WEST COAST TO TAMPICO ON GULF.

2. ALTHOUGH REPATRIATION ARRANGEMENTS HAVE BEEN JOINTLY MADE WITH CONSIDERABLE CONCESSIONS ON OUR PART, THERE HAS ARISEN A NEW FACTOR HERE WITH CONSIDERABLE POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS. UNUSUALLY HEAVY RAINS FOR THE LAST TEN DAYS HAVE CAUSED SERIOUS FLOODING IN NINE MEXICAN STATES. THE AREA MOST SERIOUSLY AFFECTED IS THE PANUCO RIVER BASIN, WHERE THERE ARE THREE THOUSAND KNOWN DEAD AND THOUSANDS MORE HOMELESS AND EVACUATED. THE TAMPICO AREA HAS BEEN DECLARED A DISASTER AREA AND THE GOM HAS MOUNTED EMERGENCY EFFORTS TO COPE WITH THE SITUATION. ALL THE USUAL PROBLEMS ATTENDANT WITH A NATURAL DISASTER--PROVIDING FOOD, CLOTHING, SHELTER, POTABLE WATER, COPING WITH DISEASE--ARE PRESENT IN THE TAMPICO AREA. ALTHOUGH
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THE PANUCO RIVER BASIN IS THE MOSE AFFECTED AREA, SERIOUS

FLOODS HAVE ALSO OCCURRED IN THE BAJIO REGION OF THE STATES OF GUANAJUATO, QUERETARO AND MICHOACAN. THERE IS ALSO FLOODING OF CRISIS PROPORTIONS IN THE STATES OF SAN LUIS POTOSI, NAYARIT, JALISCO, AGUASCALIENTES AND VERACRUZ, WITH PERHAPS SOME 200,000 PERSONS DRIVEN FROM THEIR HOMES NATIONWIDE.

3. WE ARE CONCERNED THAT, DESPITE THE EFFORTS WE HAVE MADE TO AVOID AN ADVERSE PUBLIC OR GOM REACTION, TO BEGIN REPATRIATION OF MEXICAN CITIZENS JUST NOW WOULD CREATE SUCH AN ADDITIONAL BURDEN ON STRAINED GOM RESOURCES THAT THE PROGRAM WOULD BE SEEN IN MEXICO AT BEST AS INSENSITIVE AND AT WORST AS DELIBERATELY MALICIOUS. WE THEREFORE URGE THAT THE DEPARTMENT CONSULT IMMEDIATELY WITH INS TO SEE WHETHER PROGRAM CAN BE DELAYED UNTIL FLOOD CRISIS IS UNDER CONTROL. WE DOUBT THAT THE POLITICAL PROBLEM COULD BE AVERTED SIMPLY BY CHANGING REPATRIATION FLIGHT DESTINATION, SINCE RESOURCES WHICH GOM WOULD USE TO HANDLE REPATRIATED MEXICAN HAVE BEEN DIVERTED TO THE FLOOD AREAS.

4. IN ANY CASE PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE REPATRIATION FLIGHT PROGRAM SEEMS PARTICULARLY UNHELPFUL.

5. FOREGOING COORDINATED WITH DEPT ASST SEC LUERS.

6. SUBSEQUENT TO DRAFTING THE ABOVE, AMBASSADOR GONZALEZ DE LEON CALLED URGENTLY FROM FONSEC TO SAY HE HAD WORD FROM MEXICAN CONSULATES THAT REPATRIATION PROGRAM WAS BEGINNING TODAY AND TO CALL ATTENTION TO MASSIVE FLOODING PROBLEM AFFECTING MANY AREAS TO WHICH ALIENS WERE SCHEDULED TO BE TRANSPORTED. HE PLED THAT THIS FACTOR BE TAKEN INTO ACCORD, SAYING THAT OTHERWISE PUBLIC RELATIONS ASPECT WOULD BE SERIOUSLY COMPLICATED. HE ALSO ADDED SPECIAL PLEA THAT USG AGENCIES REFRAIN FROM PUBLIC STATEMENTS ON THIS SUBJECT IF AT ALL POSSIBLE.

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